United Nations
Development Update

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Economic development policy chiefs meet in Geneva

Diverging views on coordination at ECOSOC talks

A high-level "policy dialogue" convened by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) indicated broad agreement on the need for cooperation between international financial institutions and the United Nations, but also revealed substantive differences as to how much and what kinds of cooperation are appropriate.

The 6 July meeting of the UN Secretary-General and the heads of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) followed a 4-5 July ECOSOC discussion of Africa's economy. Although focusing on measures for economic revival on the continent, the policy dialogue extended to issues which have been at the heart of international debate on global development and macro-economic policy since the beginning of the decade.

"I have come here today because I wish to demonstrate my own personal commitment to stronger partnership within the UN system", World Bank President James Wolfensohn affirmed in his prepared statement. "We are anxious to solve common problems. The World Bank can't do it alone. We can work better together with UN agencies, on the ground."

But during the ensuing policy dialogue, Mr. Wolfensohn made it clear that cooperation with UN agencies in the field does not mean the Bank intends to relinquish any of its policy-making independence. He was responding to an invitation from UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator James Gustave Speth to define the respective development roles of the UN and the World Bank. Mr. Speth has been assigned a coordinating role in UN economic and social development initiatives by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

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Breakthrough on high seas fishing

Over 100 Governments have adopted a groundbreaking agreement to prevent international conflicts over fishing on the high seas and to conserve fish stocks. They reached consensus on the controversial treaty at the close of the sixth session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, held 24 July–4 August in New York.

"It's no longer a free-for-all situation", Conference Chairman Satya N. Nandan of Fiji said at a follow-up press conference. "Governments will either cooperate to regulate fishing on the high seas, or their vessels will not be allowed to fish."

The agreement will be opened for signing in early December 1995. Although it will enter into force only after ratification by 30 countries, many countries are expected to begin implementing the agreement provisionally, especially its conservation and management measures.

Negotiations on high seas fishing, which began in April 1993, were called for at the 1992 UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

More boats, fewer fish

The growing number of international conflicts over fishing has been fueled by competition to catch a declining supply of fish. According to 1994 reports of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 70 per cent of marine fish stocks worldwide are now either fully exploited, overfished, depleted or rebuilding from previous overfishing. (More than 80 per cent of the worldwide fish catch is marine, i.e., from ocean and coastal waters; less than 20 per cent comes from fresh water.)

To feed growing populations, FAO estimates that by the year 2010 an increase of 19 million tonnes of food fish will be needed over the 1993 level of 72.3 million tonnes of freshwater and sea fish. However,

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Women's lives improve, but gender power gap remains

Women are healthier and better educated, but are finding it hard to turn this improved human potential into economic and political gains, according to two recent reports.

The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics maintains that despite educational progress, women continue to be short-changed on access to top-level positions. They account for only one or two per cent of high-level executive business positions worldwide, and in government rarely attain ministerial or sub-ministerial positions.

The study was prepared by a number of United Nations agencies to serve as an official document for the Fourth World Conference on Women, taking place 4 - 15 September in Beijing, China.

According to the *Human Development Report 1995*, released in August by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), women's literacy increased from 54 per cent of the male rate in 1970 to 74 per cent in 1990. In the developing world girls' combined primary and secondary enrollment jumped from 38 per cent in 1970 to 68 per cent in 1992. Progress in higher education has been equally rapid. Worldwide female enrollment at the tertiary level was less than half the male rate in 1970, but reached 70 per cent in 1990.

The report also finds that female life expectancy has increased 20 per cent faster than male life expectancy over the past two decades, and maternal mortality rates have been nearly halved, due to improved reproductive health care and lower fertility rates.

Nevertheless, the report says, 70 per cent of people living in poverty are women, and "in exercising real power or decision-making authority, women are a distinct minority".

Commissioned every year since 1990 by the UNDP, the report features an annual "human development index" (HDI) that rates the health, education and life expectancy of populations on a country-by-country basis. The 1995 report introduces two new indices: a "gender-related development index", measuring the difference between the HDIs of men and women; and a "gender empowerment measure" rating the gap in access to economic and political power. Special chapters focus on issues germane to the Women's Conference. (See box for Conference proposals.)

HDI on the upswing

The report finds general improvement in the well-being of the overall world population, as measured by the HDI yardstick. Between 1960 and 1992, the proportion of the world's population living in countries falling in the "high human development" category has nearly doubled. (A 1.0 HDI rating indicates an average life expectancy of at least 85 years, access to education for all and a decent level of income; "high human development" is indicated by a score of 0.8 or better.)

The report further notes that world income increased from $4 trillion in 1950 to $23 trillion in 1992, tripling per capita in the process. But it also warns that three-quarters of the world's population who live in developing countries enjoy only 16 per cent of world income.

An increasing number of national planning efforts are utilizing the report's "human development" concept, that the well-being of populations, rather than per capita income or growth rates per se, should be the primary aim of economic activity. Scores of countries are preparing their own national human development analyses, according to the report: Botswana, Colombia and Pakistan are devising national human development strategies, and the World Bank has recently set up a Human Development Department.

Key human development objectives cited by the report include accelerating job-led economic growth; investing in the human resources, especially of women; stemming population increases; ensuring basic social services; dismantling trade and investment barriers; and honoring global compacts for alleviating poverty.

The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics is a United Nations sales publication, No. E.95.XVII.2.

Human Development Report 1995 is published by Oxford University Press. ■

A five-point strategy for closing the gender gap

A summary of proposals from *Human Development Report 1995* for the Fourth World Conference on Women:

1) Set a firm timetable — preferably 10 years — to achieve universal unconditional ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; establish an international non-governmental watchdog organization to promote legal equality for women.

2) Restructure social and institutional norms, by encouraging men to share family care, making women's work schedules more flexible and changing laws on property, inheritance and divorce.

3) Take measures to reach the "threshold level" of 30 per cent of decision-making positions occupied by women, with an ultimate goal of 50 per cent.

4) Implement programmes to insure universal female education, improved reproductive health and more financial credit for women.

5) Greater access for all, and particularly for women, to economic and political opportunties — for instance, via the "20:20 compact" introduced at the Social Summit in Copenhagen, which proposes that 20 per cent of national budgets and at least 20 per cent of official development assistance be earmarked for social services and basic human needs.

Women's Conference opening in Beijing

Boosted by intersessional negotiations which removed brackets from about one-third of the draft text of an omnibus Platform for Action, the Fourth World Conference on Women opens in Beijing, China, on 4 September.

Conference organizers estimate that approximately 5,000 governmental delegates, 5,000 representatives of 2,000 non-governmental organizations and 5,000 accredited journalists are gathering in Beijing for the Conference. In addition, 35,000 are registered for the NGO Forum on Women '95 in nearby Huairou. With a total of approximately 50,000 participants, the events qualify as the largest international gathering ever held.

By reducing the amount of bracketed — that is to say, disputed — text, the intersessional negotiations held 31 July-4 August at UN headquarters advanced progress towards the final Platform for Action. Conference organizers stressed, however, that changes made at the negotiations are tentative, and the final document must be approved by the Conference itself.

Speaking at a 4 August meeting of the UN African Mothers Association, Conference Secretary-General Gertrude Mongella expressed disappointment that strong positions taken early in the preparatory process, especially concerning human rights for women, later had been revised or diluted. But she characterized these changes as "jockeying for position" in the negotiations, and expressed confidence that the final document will be stronger than the draft text.

During the intersessional negotiations, the Group of 77 Developing Countries (G-77) called for removal of brackets around text which pledged additional financial resources to improve the position of women. Developed countries, who would be called upon to provide these financial resources, preferred to keep the brackets in place. Conversely, many developed countries urged strong positions on equality, reproductive rights and civil rights for women. G-77 often balked at lifting brackets in these areas, pointing to the world's diversity of cultural traditions regarding gender relations and warning against a "universal" approach to these questions.

"This conference builds on previous UN conferences on the environment, human rights, population and social development, and will advance the gains they have made on behalf of women by agreeing on actions that are precise, specific, measureable and for which governments will be held accountable," predicted Mr. John Mathiason, Deputy Director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women. "In so doing," he told *Development Update*, "when the brackets are finally removed, it will go beyond what those conferences have achieved."

The draft Platform for Action deals with 12 "areas of concern", identified at preparatory sessions held in all the major regions of the globe:

1. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women;
2. Unequal access to and inadequate educational opportunities;
3. Inequalities in health status, and unequal access to and inadequate health-care services;
4. Violence against women;
5. Effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women;
6. Inequality in women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the production process itself;
7. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;
8. Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;
9. Lack of awareness of, and commitment to, internationally and nationally recognized women's human rights;
10. Insufficient mobilization of mass media to promote women's positive contribution to society;
11. Lack of adequate recognition and support for women's contribution to managing natural resources and safeguarding the environment;
12. The girl child. ■

UN's 50th to be largest summit ever

The vast majority of Member States — between 150 and 170 — will be represented at the head of State or head of Government level at the special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly marking the United Nations' fiftieth anniversary. This summit, the largest ever convened, will be held at New York headquarters 22-24 October 1995. United Nations Day is 24 October.

The world leaders will be received by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali at a dinner in the UN Delegates' Lounge on 22 October. President Bill Clinton of the United States of America, who will be the opening speaker at the summit, will also host an official event that day. New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani will host an official dinner on Saturday, 21 October.

The commemoration is an opportunity for world leaders to reflect on past successes and failures and then look to the future, according to Ms. Gillian Sorensen, Under-Secretary-General for Public Policy in charge of 50th anniversary arrangements. "We want this anniversary to have some depth, some true substance, to have some analysis and some thinking, as well as some celebration," she said. ■

Diverging views

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In General Assembly debate and in discussions at global conferences, the developing countries frequently have expressed a feeling of exclusion from decision making on global economic issues and sought redress in greater UN involvement in the workings of the Bank, the IMF and the WTO. The developed countries generally point out that the international financial institutions have their own independent mandates and each reports to a board of directors representing contributing countries. Many representatives of the industrialized world say that the UN's "comparative advantage" is in humanitarian and peacekeeping missions and building consensus on social issues; other institutions should be in charge of the nuts and bolts of economic policy.

In his address on 4 July opening the high-level segment, the Secretary-General made his position on the breadth of the UN's development role clear, saying that "economic and social problems must be at the core of the Organization's concerns".

IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus delivered a message similar to Mr. Wolfensohn's. He spoke of "the importance of collaboration among the institutions that form the UN family", and named three areas where enhanced collaboration is taking place: stronger collaboration between the IMF and the International Labour Organization on employment policies; coordinating IMF policy advice with UNDP technical assistance programmes; assistance to countries emerging from conflict situations. He also stressed the UN's importance in preventing war and dealing with human and social concerns, but failed to mention an economic policy-making role for the Organization.

Demand coordination

In contrast, UNCTAD Officer-in-Charge Carlos Fortín came to the high-level segment with a number of specific suggestions for global economic coordination.

Despite the harmful effects of recent volatility of national currencies, he noted, the current trend "has been to less, not more coordination" of global economic policy. He proposed alignment of stimulative macro-economic measures among the major economies to help stabilize economies of developed and developing countries alike. More determined efforts to create and sustain demand would also help solve the unemployment crisis that plagues many developed and developing countries, Mr. Fortín said.

Africa recovery

At the 6 July policy dialogue, the Secretary-General challenged the international community to find ways of providing additional help to "countries in a state of war". He pointed out that there are ten serious conflicts underway in Africa alone, and there is a possiblity that 30 to 40 more countries on the continent may soon be similarly affected.

"How can we boost aid in order to prevent war; how do we work on the relief-development continuum during conflicts; and, how do we build the peace?" asked the Secretary-General. He said that affected countries need a transition period of up to three years with special treatment due to the damage and social and economic dislocation caused by war.

At the 4-5 July discussion of Africa, Mr. Wolfensohn and Mr. Camdessus emphasized that major efforts are required to realize the continent's great potential. The Bank chief said globalization (the increasing integration of economies, technologies and information) "promises prosperity for us all", but Mr. Camdessus warned that failure to take advantage of globalization would bring increased marginalization.

Only those countries with strong structural adjustment programmes — which aim to balance governmental budgets and liberalize economic policy — "stand a chance today" of getting support from multilateral and bilateral donors, Mr. Camdessus added, calling for higher and more effective aid flows. ■

Experts write prescription for good governance

More than 50 experts on public administration and finance meeting at United Nations Headquarters issued recommendations for improved governance that will lay the groundwork for a special 1996 session of the UN General Assembly.

Experts at the 31 July-11 August meeting emphasized that governments must create and sustain an enabling environment in which the private sector can flourish while maintaining their role in the social sector, where the public good must be preserved. They advised the donor community to adopt a common approach to public administration issues, so as to avoid overlapping or contradictory initiatives.

Recommendations of the experts, who are from governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies and financial institutions, will be reviewed at a session of the Economic and Social Council later this year. The recommendations and the Council's comments will serve as the basis of a report by the Secretary-General to the Resumed 50th General Assembly Session on Public Administration and Finance, to be held early in 1996.

The importance of public sector management is increasingly recognized by developing countries seeking to attract private investment and development assistance, by countries reforming previously centralized economies, and by developed countries re-examining the relation between public and private sectors, according to Mr. Ji Chaozhu, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Development Support and Management (DDSMS). The DDSMS provides technical assistance around the world, including post-conflict assistance to Haiti, Cambodia, El Salvador, Gaza and Rwanda. ■

ECOSOC reform on the horizon

"The Economic and Social Council has a decisive role to play in the ongoing reform process within the United Nations," Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said in his 4 July opening address to ECOSOC's high-level segement in Geneva.

This role includes coordinating UN social and economic development programmes and integrating and clarifying their mandates, the Secretary-General said. But to do this effectively, he indicated, ECOSOC itself is in need of revitalization. A similar conclusion was drawn by ECOSOC President Ahmad Kamal (Ambassador of Pakistan) in his 28 July address closing the 1995 ECOSOC session.

The Secretary-General referred directly to the communique issued the previous month by the Group of 7 (G-7) leading industrialized countries (Japan, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy) at their June meeting in Halifax, Canada.

"I was struck by the will shown by the most highly industrialized countries at the Halifax Summit to develop a more effective internal policy coordination role for the Economic and Social Council", the Secretary-General told ECOSOC, adding that "this will was also shown at the meeting in Bandung of non-Aligned countries" (in April).

But while the G-7 communique asked the UN to "consolidate and streamline organizations in the economic and social fields", the Secretary-General defined the reform process in terms of seeking to "strengthen the powers and spheres of action of Economic and Social Council".

Irrelevant and immaterial

Ambassador Kamal's challenge to ECOSOC to fulfill its mandate was stated more bluntly.

"Not much headway is made on issues that really need to be addressed," he told the closing session of the Council. "Instead, we come up with anodyne decisions and recommendations that are acceptable to all and of value to none. . . If we are serious about the work of the Council, if we think it serves our interests, then new attitudes have to emerge," he warned. "Otherwise, the Council is doomed to irrelevance."

ECOSOC's deliberations have been "repeatedly stymied by many of the members dividing into two rigid camps," he said — an apparent reference to the industrialized countries, on one hand, and the developing countries, represented by the Group of 77 (G-77), on the other.

Criticisms from other quarters have addressed ECOSOC's structure. Composed of 54 member states, ECOSOC is said by some to be too large and unwieldy to act decisively or reach agreement on controversial issues. G-7 countries have argued in favour of a more compact body, while G-77 opposes such a move. If membership is reduced, G-77 fears, the rich countries that remain as Council members will gain influence because the number of seats assigned to smaller and less developed countries would be likely to decline.

Another structural problem often referred to is the large number of agencies with overlapping mandates and operations that ECOSOC must oversee. The Halifax Communiqué, for instance, wants the UN to "update and focus mandates to avoid duplication; eliminate overlaps with new organizations, e.g., UNCTAD [the UN Conference on Trade and Development] with the WTO [World Trade Organization], and consider the roles of certain institutions in light of evolving challenges, e.g. Regional Economic Commissions and UNIDO [the UN Industrial Development Organization]."

This and other G-7 statements have been interpreted as proposals to consider the abolition of UNIDO and UNCTAD, moves which G-77 steadfastly opposes. The continued existence of UNCTAD in particular is considered crucial by G-77, as the Conference generally speaks for the interests of developing countries on trade and economic issues and provides technical assistance and infrastructure for advancing commerce in the developing world.

Calls for an overhaul of ECOSOC have come from other quarters. The Commission on Global Governance, an independent Geneva-based think tank, has said ECOSOC should be replaced by a new Economic Security Council, structured along the lines of the 15-member UN Security Council. A Ford Foundation study proposes two new bodies: an Economic Council and a Social Council. And Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his June 1994 *An Agenda for Development*, calls for "revitalization" of ECOSOC and suggests the possibility of an "expanded bureau" with limited membership to oversee ECOSOC's work between sessions of the main body.

Working groups

Reform initiatives will be on the agenda of the 50th session of the General Assembly, opening 19 September.

A resolution drafted by Mr. Amara Essy (Cote d'Ivoire), outgoing president of the 49th General Assembly, would establish an Open-ended High-level Working Group to review proposals for strengthening and reforming the UN and report back to the Assembly before completion of the 50th session. Mr. Essy's resolution notes that if activated, this body should take account of the deliberations of four other working groups that will be reporting to the General Assembly on related matters: on an agenda for development (see *Development Update* #9), on the financial situation of the UN, on equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, and on an agenda for peace and prospective financing for development. ■

High-Seas Fishing

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catches of wild fish dropped dramatically by 3.5 million tonnes between 1989 and 1990 and continue to decline, in spite of the fact that more and more boats are harvesting the seas with increasingly sophisticated technologies.

"No more fishing by stealth"

Under the agreement, countries will be legally bound to conserve and sustainably manage fish stocks and to settle peacefully any disputes that arise over fishing on the high seas.

The hotly contested provisions on how to enforce quotas and conservation measures set by regional fishing organizations for high seas areas survived "with their teeth intact", according to Ambassador Nandan. The 50-article agreement gives any country that is a member of a regional fishing arrangement the right to board and inspect any vessels fishing in that area. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that a vessel is violating regional conservation rules, the State which has registered the ship — the flag State — will be notified. If the flag State does not respond within three working days – during which time the inspectors may remain on board — the inspecting State can detain the vessel in port.

Either the inspecting State or the flag State can pursue settlement of the dispute through one of the legal options established under the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. These include bringing a claim before the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, the International Court of Justice or an ad hoc tribunal.

The agreement on high seas fishing reached in New York in August includes significant new provisions to ensure compatible conservation and management measures between high seas areas and the coastal zones under national jurisdiction, where 90 per cent of marine fish stocks are located.

The treaty also obliges captains of fishing trawlers to report the size of their catches and the fish they discard through their Governments to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and to regional fishing organizations. The regional organizations will determine quotas and other measures for specific stocks in their area.

Only countries which agree to adhere to the conservation and management measures adopted by regional fishing organizations will have access to the fishing grounds administered by those organizations. Membership in the regional organizations is to be open and non-discriminatory, the treaty stipulates.

"It's no longer a free-for-all situation. Governments will either cooperate to regulate fishing on the high seas, or their vessels will not be allowed to fish."

—Satya N. Nandan, Conference Chairman

"If this agreement is applied, there should be no fishing by stealth any more," said Ambassador Nandan. Deliberate underreporting of catches, now suspected to be widespread, would be monitored by ships which have the right to board and inspect vessels to ensure compliance with regional agreements.

Advice and consent

The debate on enforcement provisions and the right of States to board and inspect vessels on the high seas was spurred by an incident last April, when Canadian gunboats seized a Spanish fishing trawler in the high seas off Newfoundland and accused the crew of violating regional quotas for turbot.

Canadian Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Brian Tobin praised the new agreement as "a major step forward for sustainable development" and said the UN had "moved decisively and effectively". He said that most States realized it is time "either to play by a set of internationally agreed upon regulations or face anarchy on the high seas."

While expressing satisfaction that the agreement reaffirmed the sovereignty of flag States over their vessels at all times, the European Union (EU) Commissioner for Fisheries, Ms. Emma Bonino, warned that the agreement's language on the use of force in boarding and inspecting vessels was vague and could lead to abuses and harassment on the high seas. In a "major spirit of compromise", the EU had joined the consensus, she said, but will continue to seek more specific conditions on this question within the regional fishing organizations.

Some environmental groups lobbying the negotiations claim that the new agreement does not go far enough to halt destructive fishing practices. These include use of non-selective fishing gear, which causes some 27 million tonnes of less valuable fish and marine life to be discarded dead each year — equal to one-third the weight of all reported catches — as well as massive overcapitalization of fishing fleets through Government subsidies.

The agreement's language on selective fishing gear had been weakened in the final negotiations under pressure from the fishing industry, according to Matthew Gianni of Greenpeace, and it failed to address the issue of excessive subsidies.

Ambassador Nandan contended, however, that the treaty would almost certainly curb the size of high-seas fishing fleets, as it will cut profits by forcing fishing boats on the high seas to stay within agreed-upon quotas. Ms. Bonino acknowledged that the EU will be advising its members, particularly Spain and Portugal, to restructure their fishing industry, anticipating that high-seas catches will likely drop.

Government subsidies to fishing fleets now total some $54 billion annually, according to FAO. The Organization estimates that rehabilitating fish stocks back to 1970 levels will require removing 23 per cent of the world's registered fishing fleets, valued at some $73 billion. ■

UN offensive against land-mines

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali reiterated his call for a ban on the production and sale of anti-personnel mines at the 5-7 July International Meeting on Mine Clearance. Donors attending the meeting called for by the UN General Assembly pledged nearly $90 million for mine-clearing operations.

"We must eliminate land-mines once and for all", the Secretary-General told experts and representatives of 97 countries meeting in Geneva. "We must ban their production. We must destroy those that are stockpiled."

"The world is facing a global land-mines crisis of such proportions that present international mine-clearance and rehabilitative projects are not enough," Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Peter Hansen told participants.

Of the $90 million pledged, $22 million was allocated to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance, established last November to provide more resources for rapid UN response to requests for assistance. Most land-mine clearing programmes are set up and initially implemented by the United Nations, using contributions from donor countries.

The meeting addressed technical and management aspects of the problem, including mine surveys, methods of clearance, rehabilitation of victims, training of indigenous de-miners, awareness and education, new technologies, and planning of integrated mine-clearance programmes.

"This is the first time the international community has met exclusively to address this issue" said Jorg Wimmers, de-mining officer of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Mines sap development efforts

The total number of land-mines deployed in 65 countries is estimated at 110 million, and between two and five million more are planted every year, according to last year's report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. About 10,000 people, most of them civilians, are killed by land-mines every year; another 20,000 are injured.

Rural people are the most frequent casualties: women fetching firewood or water and working the fields, men using draught animals to till the soil and children mistaking small land-mines for toys.

In its presentation, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) showed that in addition to inflicting physical and psychological damage on civilians, land-mines disrupt social services and threaten food security by preventing thousands of hectares of productive land from being farmed.

Mines also hinder peace-making efforts by slowing the deployment of peace-keeping forces and restricting their movement, hampering delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations, and discouraging return and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons. Mr. Anders Wijkman, Director of the UNDP's Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, said that successful post-conflict recovery programmes require participatory systems at local and national levels, rebuilding of community structures, and efficient delivery of basic services. The presence of land-mines impedes attainment of all those objectives and perpetuates wartime conditions, he said.

The issue of banning production, use and sale of land-mines will be discussed at a Review Conference of States Parties to the 1980 Convention on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects, to be held in Vienna in September. That meeting will focus on the Convention's Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices. ■

Investment in Africa: holding for take-off

Indications that Africa offers a higher rate of return on overseas direct investment than any other region appear in a new report from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The primary thesis of *Foreign Direct Investment in Africa*, released in July, is that the continent's investment potential is largely untapped. Economic liberalization carried out in the 1980s and 1990s has improved investment prospects significantly, according to the report, but Africa is the only major region that has not benefited from booming world trade the surge in investment flows across national borders.

Belying the generally "miserable" image investors have of Africa is an impressive track record of return on foreign direct investment, the report's main author, Mr. Zbigniew Zimny, told *Development Update*.

"In most years during the 1980-1993 period, the rate of return in Africa was higher than the average for all developing countries," the report notes. "The only region which outperformed Africa during most of this period was Asia," it continues. "However, as the rate of return in Asia declined, while that in Africa remained at a relatively high level during the 1990s, Africa has become the region with the highest rates of return."

While most of the profits come from primary commodities, especially petroleum, the report points out that the rate of return in the African manufacturing sector compares favourably with the return on Asian manufacturing and far exceeds that found in the developed countries.

Foreign Direct Investment in Africa is a United Nations sales publication, No. E.95.II.A.6 ■

Development Update

Calendar 1995–1996

1995

International Year for Tolerance

26 June - 28 July
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) annual meeting
(Geneva, Switzerland)

4 - 6 July
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) High-level Segment on Africa
(Geneva, Switzerland)

5 - 7 July
International Meeting on Mine Clearance
(Geneva, Switzerland)

24 July - 4 August
United Nations Conference on Highly Migratory and Straddling Fish Stocks, sixth session
(New York, USA)

31 July - 11 August
Twelfth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance
(New York, USA)

4 - 15 September
Fourth World Conference on Women
(Beijing, China)

20 September - 6 October
UNCTAD High Level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-Term Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s
(New York, USA)

25 September - 6 October
Commission on Human Rights — Working Group on the Right to Development
(Geneva, Switzerland)

25 September - 13 October
Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects
(Vienna, Austria)

10 - 12 October
International Monetary Fund/World Bank — Annual meetings of the Boards of Governors
(Washington, D.C., USA)

16 - 20 October
International Panel on Climate Change
(Geneva, Switzerland)

22 - 24 October
Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations
(New York, USA)

24 October
United Nations 50th Anniversary

6 - 17 November
Second Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
(Djakarta, Indonesia)

19 - 22 November
Habitat II International Conference on "Best Practices in Improving Living Environments"
(Dubai, United Arabs Emirates)

27 November - 1 December
Meeting of the States Parties to the United Convention on the Law of the Sea
(New York, USA)

1996

International Year for the Eradication of Poverty

5 - 16 February
Third Preparatory Committee Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements — Habitat II
(New York, USA)

3 - 14 June
United Nations Conference on Human Settlements — Habitat II
(Istanbul, Turkey)

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